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SIX DAYS Under Havana Harbor: or, Frank Reade, Jr.'s Secret Service Work For Uncle Sam. BY "NONAME."



Progress was necessarily slow, but after a while they reached the side of the wreck. On the way they cut the wire which the nose of the Filibuster had encountered. But Frank picked up the end of it and followed it to the wreck.

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Six Days Under Havana Harbor;

OR,

Frank Reade, Jr.'s Secret Service Work For Uncle Sam.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "The Sacred Sea," "The Circuit of Cancer," "In the Tundras," "The Silver Sea," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

AN IMPORTANT MISSION.

THE state of affairs had long demanded that the government of the United States should acquaint itself more fully with the condition of the defenses of the harbor of Havana, Cuba.

War was threatening with Spain, and the condition of the unfortunate Cubans, long ground into the dust by the armed heel of the despot, had awakened the sympathies of the entire civilized world.

Everything had been done by the President of the United States, in a temperate and pacific manner, to bring about a peaceable settlement of the Cuban war, which had annihilated so many millions of American interests in the ever faithful isle and made of itself a gaunt, grizzly phantom of horror at the very threshold of the land of freedom.

Knowing that their cause was sure to win, it was natural that the Cuban insurgents should decline to yield and return to the yoke.

Proud, and stung to the quick by her defeats, Spain regarded every conciliatory move made by the United States as a shrewd device to win the island from her. This she resented even to the verge of war.

The United States Navy was not the most powerful in the world. But it was being rapidly strengthened, and secret agents were continually surveying the field of possible action and gaining an outline of the best course of action in case of an emergency.

Thus it happened that one day the Secretary of the Navy received from the president a request to, as far as possible, ascertain the submarine defenses of Havana Harbor at once.

This was not easy.

The Spaniard had for years been engaged in the task of making the defenses of the Cuban capital utterly impregnable. It was known that underground galleries, secret mines and torpedoes and a network of destructive wires covered the bottom of this harbor.

To gain an accurate knowledge therefore of these submarine defenses was a most essential thing for the United States government. The president immediately summoned the Secretary of the Navy and a long and secret consultation was held.

"It must be done!" declared the president. "The fertile ingenuity of our people must be exerted to ascertain the exact condition of that harbor bottom before any of our war ships may enter there."

"I agree with you that the emergency demands such action, but as to its feasibility I am not sanguine," replied the secretary dubiously.

"It is not at all a question of feasibility," declared the head of the nation, with true American spirit. "It is a case of *must*, and we have somewhere among us a genius capable of rendering the solution of the problem."

"I will advertise——"

"No! That would at once put the Spaniard on his guard. It might even precipitate war. What is done, must be under the implicit direction of the Naval Secret Service Bureau, or it will be a failure."

"Very well," replied the secretary, rising. "I will confer with them and submit to you a report later."

"I shall await that report with eagerness."

"I can hold forth but little hope."

"Hope never dies in the breast of the patriotic American, nor has he ever failed to meet a national emergency. In the late war this was

proved. Somewhere to-day, among us, there is an Ericsson or a Cushing, who shall come forward with just the invention for the hour."

"I pray so, but I can see no way of exploring the bottom of the harbor save with a submarine boat, which can remain under water any length of time, and also can grope securely among the torpedoes and mines with safety. Such a boat, to my knowledge, does not exist in the world."

"We shall see. Let secret agents be dispatched over the entire country, and you may be sure some result will be reached."

The secretary bowed and retired. At a late hour that night the Secret Service Bureau held a meeting, in a place known only to themselves. A representative of the Navy Department was present.

For an hour the discussion was warm. All sorts of plans were considered and rejected.

At times the debate became perplexing, and even acrimonious. But no definite action could be agreed upon.

Suddenly the naval lieutenant looked at his watch and said:

"My colleagues are now due here. The secretary has detailed three of us to act with you honorable gentlemen in this matter. Myself, Ensign James Clark and Lieutenant Alfred May."

As he spoke Lieutenant Charles Ford, one of the secretary's most trusted attaches, laid upon the table before the chief detective, James Swinton, his credentials from the Navy Department.

Swinton, the shrewdest fox in the Secret Service, glanced at them and then keenly at Ford.

"Why has the secretary put James Clark upon this commission with you?"

Ford looked astonished.

"Clark!" he exclaimed, "what is wrong with Clark?"

"Possibly nothing. But have you heard his history?"

Ford drew a deep breath.

"Swinton, is there a skeleton in the closet of any government employe of which you do not know?"

"That is what I am paid for," replied the detective.

"Well, you are master of your profession. Candidly, I know nothing of Clark's past and positively nothing against his character."

"I am aware of no crime which he has ever committed. But he is a one time resident of Madrid."

"An American born, though. That would prove no sympathy with the Spanish cause."

"That is not all. He had a Spanish wife. I believe she lives in Havana at present."

Ford whistled slowly.

"How on earth did you learn all that?" he asked. "As long as I have known Clark in the navy he never has spoken of a wife, Spanish or otherwise."

"That is of little consequence. The fact remains."

"I think I can tell you why the secretary selected Clark. He speaks Spanish fluently, and is more familiar with Havana Harbor than any other man in our navy."

"Just so! Mind, I do not intimate that Clark is treacherous. But on this commission no man should have been chosen whose sympathies promised the slightest possibility of wavering for Spain."

"I will defend Ensign Clark."

"We will drop the matter here. Ah, there comes someone."

There was a light tap at the door. Ford slid back the bolt and opened it.

Two men dressed in naval uniform entered. One was tall and darkly handsome, with a dashing air and a blase smile. This was Ensign Clark.

The other was young and rather plain looking, but with a fearless, stern gaze. Such was Lieutenant Alfred May.

Introductions were quickly in order. Ensign Clark was as jolly and open as a freehearted naval officer could wish, and seemed to dispel at once any possible suspicion. Ford watched Swinton narrowly, but the detective seldom glanced at the suspected man, and his face was sphinx like.

The conclave was quickly got down to business. The discussion was resumed. When asked for his opinion, Clark said, recklessly:

"My opinion is that toleration with Spain is a mistake. We should send war ships there instantly, and let our divers locate the mines. If the Spaniards resist, put out torpedo nets and bombard Morro Castle. Bring them to their senses with a whoop."

For a moment after this ardent declaration there was silence. Swinton seemed not to have heard it. But Ford said in a somewhat irritated manner:

"That is not the government's policy. We are here to devise a secret method of exploration of that harbor. Has anybody a suggestion to make?"

"I have!" said Lieutenant May, tersely.

"You?"

All eyes were turned upon the grave-faced young officer.

"Yes."

"Please name it," said Swinton, with a strange light in his ferret eyes.

"I have a friend who has perfected a submarine boat, with which I am absolutely sure Havana Harbor can be secretly explored."

This quiet statement created a most intense sensation. Every eye was upon the serious face of May. Swinton half closed his eyes, and it could not be told where his inscrutable gaze was centered.

Ford looked approval, but Clark gave a little start, and then affected a careless skepticism.

"Submarine boats, thus far, have proved dismal failures," he said.

"I can assure you that this one is a success."

"That is what we want," said Ford. "Who is the inventor?"

"Frank Reade, Jr., of Readestown."

Swinton opened his eyes wide and looked at the speaker.

"Why!" he exclaimed, "that is the young man who invented the air ship and other wonderful things! I have always believed him the brainiest inventor in this country."

"He is a talented man," declared Ford. "He is also a loyal American and offers the services of his boat, himself and his two faithful men free to the government."

"I will communicate with the secretary at an early hour to-morrow morning," said Ford, arising.

Five minutes later the meeting was dissolved. The naval officers departed for their quarters at the Ebbitt House. In the hotel corridor the three officers met a richly dressed lady partly veiled.

May and Ford stepped aside courteously to let her pass, but Clark affected not to notice her and there was rather a rude collision.

The woman's dark face was visible for one flashing instant in the hall light, convulsed with anger, while a foreign adjective dropped from her lips as she hurried on.

"Pardon me!" exclaimed Clark, lifting his hat. "By Jove! She was really angry at me, shipmates."

"And a Cuban at that, for that was a Spanish curse which she dropped," cried Ford. "Rather a bad start for you, Clark. You have met, but you have not conquered the first foe."

Clark laughed merrily. Indeed, he seemed to be in exceptionally good spirits. The three officers now parted, going to their rooms.

But in the shadow at the lower end of the hotel corridor there had stood a man whose features were half-concealed by a slouch hat.

He had seen the affront, seemingly unintentional of Clark and the Cuban lady, and it seemed to him that in that contact their hands had met.

A moment later the Cuban lady vanished into her room. Slowly the unknown man strolled by that door, and as he passed wrote the number in a note book.

A few moments later, in the office below, he raised his hat brim in the full glare of the electric light and stood revealed as Swinton, the detective. The first incident in the game of international intrigue was a thing of the past.

CHAPTER II.

SOUTHWARD BOUND.

DEEP down among the lovely hills and upon a navigable river, leading to the sea, was the beautiful little city of Readestown.

Several generations of Reades had dwelt there and given their name to the town. The only living representative at the present time was Frank Reade, Jr., known the world over as a great inventor.

That he was a genius none could deny. He had amassed a large fortune from his inventions.

There were few parts of the world to which he had not journeyed in some of his inventions. He seldom took with him other traveling companions than Barney, the Irishman, and Pomp, the negro.

These were two faithful followers long in his service, and deeply attached to him.

Frank had just completed his new submarine boat, the Filibuster. He had contemplated a trip to the West Indies, when one day a quiet gentleman, with a reticent manner, called upon him. They were closeted for a long time.

After he had departed Frank Reade, Jr., touched a bell, which summoned Barney and Pomp.

"Now, you two rascals," he said, with mock severity, "there is work ahead for you. How near ready is the Filibuster for a cruise?" Barney scraped, and Pomp ducked his woolly head.

"It am mos' ready, sah!" cried the coon.

"Begorra, thar's but little more to be done," declared Barney. "Av yez say the worrud, we can have it all ready in twinty-four hours, sor."

"Good!" cried Frank. "That is the way I like to hear you talk. I want you to rush things and get all in readiness to start at the earliest possible moment."

"Whurroo!" cried Barney.

"Golly!" ejaculated Pomp.

"Now be off with you!"

Away they scampered. Jolly jokers they were, both of them, and as fond of a good time as one could imagine.

Frank turned to a pile of drawings on his table.

One of these was marked Filibuster, and gave in outline a description of the submarine boat.

As thus revealed the Filibuster was seen to be a remarkable craft.

She was patterned something after the type of a government cruiser, and was built of steel from stem to stern, from keelson to masthead.

Designed to travel either upon or under the surface, as the navigator might choose, her construction was radically different from the ordinary craft.

Her timbers were more strongly stayed, and her proportions more carefully considered, for the deep sea pressure was a factor of most serious consideration.

But Frank had provided for every contingency, and the boat was so built that she could descend to a great depth.

Her deck was of steel and provided with skylights. Forward was a high conning tower and pilot house. Underneath this a light dynamite gun was placed, the invention of Frank Reade, Jr., and a most powerful weapon.

There were three of those guns, two in the after tower and one forward. So the Filibuster was almost a war vessel.

Indeed, Uncle Sam had no vessel in his navy capable of accomplishing greater disaster than this submarine boat with its three dynamite guns.

The cabin occupied the section amidships, and the second cabin and store chambers were aft. The cabins were furnished very richly.

In the hold were plenty of stores for a long voyage. In every respect the Filibuster was fully equipped.

The power of sinking and rising was controlled by large tanks forward and astern, which filled or were emptied by means of pneumatic pressure. The boat could be gauged to remain suspended at any depth.

The most important provision of all, however, was that of air for the interior of the boat while under water.

This was furnished by means of chemical generators, Frank's invention, which furnished pure oxygen in unlimited quantities, which was disseminated through the boat by means of tubes and valves. In a similar manner all foul gases were absorbed and destroyed.

This, in brief, is a description of the submarine boat, which was so soon to enter upon a series of experiences more thrilling than any ever recorded.

Within twenty-four hours a cipher dispatch reached Frank Reade, Jr., at Readestown.

Deciphered, he read it as follows:

"WASHINGTON, D. C., March, 18—.

"TO FRANK READE, JR.:

"Meet the United States cutter, Tornado, off Sandy Hook Monday night at twelve. Signals will be red, white and blue.

"FORD."

Frank quickly arose and passed out into the great yard of the machine works. It was but a moment's work for him to reach the inner yard.

Here, in a great basin, lay the submarine boat. This basin was connected with the river by means of a canal and lock.

Frank crossed a plank and went aboard the submarine boat. Barney and Pomp were in the cabin putting things to rights.

The two jokers were delighted with Frank's announcement that they were to start at once for Havana.

"Bejabers, all is ready, sor!" cried the Celt. "There's no raison for delay."

"Very well!" said Frank. "Two hours from now the boat must be in the river and on its way."

There were a few arrangements to be made by Frank before the start. He at once went about making these.

The machine works were closed until he should return, and left in charge of competent watchmen. The two hours had hardly elapsed when Frank found all in readiness.

No word had gone forth that the young inventor intended to leave Readestown, so in the dusk the boat slipped away down the river without being noticed.

Before morning it was far out to sea. In due time Sandy Hook was sighted.

Here the submarine boat cruised about all Sunday night, waiting for

morning to come so that the appointment could be kept with the Tornado.

But when daylight came the government cutter was not on hand. Other craft passed in and out by the little submarine boat without giving it special notice.

"That is peculiar," said Frank, with surprise. "I am sure I read the cipher right. We are on time."

It was idle to assume that the government had repented of its agreement, and had decided not to keep the appointment. Something was radically wrong.

What this was our submarine voyagers could not even guess. Frank even ventured up into the mouth of New York harbor.

But not a sign of the Tornado was to be seen.

In the Narrows a great Spanish war ship was just making her anchor and preparing to pass out to sea. A small boat was seen to suddenly approach her.

It was a small steam yacht, and it seemed in great haste to reach the war ship.

Frank studied the vessel with a glass and read her name:

Vizcaya!

"Ah!" muttered the young inventor, "that is the vessel expected here so long from Madrid. She is evidently going to make a short stay in this port."

The gang ladder of the Vizcaya was down, and as the little yacht ranged alongside, several men went up her side and onto the deck.

Then the yacht bore away, the big war ship freed her moorings, smoke poured from her funnels, and she moved out seaward.

No salute was fired from her guns. Not even a flag was dipped. Our submarine voyagers watched the big vessel with interest, little dreaming that she was in any way connected with the very mission which called them to Havana.

Soon the big war ship was hull down in the southeast. It was evident that her course was for Cuba.

Again Frank scanned the sea with his glass.

No Tornado yet put in an appearance. He again consulted the cipher dispatch.

It seemed all very strange. He could see that the cipher read "Tornado, Sandy Hook, Monday morning." There was no error there.

"It is very strange," he muttered. "What does it all mean? I don't see how there could be a misunderstanding."

He was resolved to remain where he was until the next morning.

Then failing to hear from the Tornado, he would put boldly into the harbor and wire Washington. For he would be sure that there was a mistake.

But in this state of affairs a strange incident occurred.

Barney spied a queer looking boat bearing down upon the submarine boat. It came apparently from the Navesink shore.

It was coming at full speed, and not a person was to be seen on its deck. Frank took one glance at it, and a sharp cry escaped his lips.

He saw something flashing beneath the wave crests between the two crafts, and a great cry pealed from his lips:

"Into the cabin—quick! A torpedo is coming for us, and if we don't get under it we shall be blown to atoms this moment!"

CHAPTER III.

THE QUESTION OF THE TRAITOR.

BARNEY and Pomp needed no second bidding.

The next instant they dodged in from the deck. Frank stepped like a flash into the pilot house.

One touch upon an electric button and every door and window was sealed. Another touch and the Filibuster instantly sank.

There was not a second to spare. The deadly torpedo fairly grazed the top of the cabin as it passed over the submarine boat.

Where it went to beyond was never known. Doubtless it eventually sank for it certainly struck nothing with its percussion point, for no explosion ensued.

The submarine boat was saved.

Frank instantly realized that treachery was at work and that the Spaniards had in some way learned of the expedition, and had laid a clever trap to destroy the Filibuster.

And they had nigh won success.

A fraction of a second more and the fate of the Filibuster and its crew would never have been known to the American people.

It would have been only another strange mystery of the sea.

But the Filibuster was now far below the possible reach of any torpedo. She was safe.

But Frank was not satisfied. He longed for revenge upon the treacherous and cunning Spaniard.

"I'll teach them a lesson," he muttered.

He turned on the search-light, and sent its rays far through the submarine depths.

He was able to remember about the locality of the torpedo boat, and it did not take long to focus the search-light upon its keel.

Its torpedo tubes were plainly seen. It seemed to be lying motionless upon the surface.

"Doubtless they are chagrined at their failure," declared Frank. "But they need not be. Their attempt was a clever one. Now for retaliation."

Frank allowed the submarine boat to approach within twenty yards of the torpedo boat.

The guns were so fixed aboard the Filibuster by means of spring valves that they could be fired under water without a drop of water entering their muzzles or coming aboard.

These valves were affixed to the muzzles and would open at the instant discharge and quickly close thereafter. Frank trained the forward gun upon the torpedo boat's keel.

It was but a moment's work to put a small dynamite shell in the breech. Then he fired at the torpedo boat's keel.

The impact exploded the shell. There was a shock and a boiling of the waters. The keel of the torpedo boat was crushed in.

Frank fired only once.

The torpedo boat was filling and sinking. Frank sent the Filibuster now to the surface.

And a startling sight was revealed.

A small boat containing four men had left the sinking craft and were nearing the Jersey shore. They were undoubtedly the Spanish crew.

Frank put after them, but they were able to get into shallow water and out of reach. Landing, they quickly disappeared.

The torpedo boat was at the bottom of the channel. The attempt to destroy the submarine boat was a failure.

Barney and Pomp cheered loudly and triumphantly. Frank was overjoyed with their good fortune.

But he was yet in a quandary what to do.

But as he allowed the Filibuster to drift back to the outer waters, Barney suddenly cried:

"Whurroo, Mither Frank! There comes another of the spalpeens! Scuttle him, sor, afore they get too near!"

But Frank saw that the small white launch, with its brass trimmings, carried the flag of the naval commodore, and knew that she was a friend.

He answered the signal made. The next moment the launch Petrel was alongside.

Upon her deck stood a number of uniformed officers.

The reader has seen them before. Ensign James Clark, Lieutenants May and Ford and Detective Swinton with four of his men were at the rail.

"Aho!" shouted Ford, excitedly. "Is that Mr. Frank Reade, Jr.?"

"It is!" replied Frank.

"What are you doing here?"

Frank was astonished.

"Why should you ask that?" he said. "I am here in obedience to your cipher message. Where is the cutter Tornado?"

"The Tornado is in the South Pacific," returned Ford. "It is plain that we are all the victims of a conspiracy. That cipher dispatch was a forgery."

"A forgery!" exclaimed Frank. "How can that be possible? The cipher was the same as given me by you!"

"Ah!" said Swinton, in a whisper to Ford; "did I not tell you so? Who could have given away the key to the cipher?"

Ford could not reply.

He was nearly dumfounded. Some mysterious things had transpired.

But the little launch came alongside and the naval officers came aboard and shook hands with Frank.

"There must be a misunderstanding somewhere," said Frank. "Your dispatch told me to meet you here."

Ford looked at Swinton.

"My dispatch," he said, "was to the effect that we would meet you in Readestown last night."

"When did you send it?"

"Yesterday."

"I was not there to receive it."

"So we learned, when we went down to board the Filibuster at Readestown," said Ford. "From your foreman we were able to learn that you had sailed for Sandy Hook to meet the Tornado. We have come here post haste, for we feared treachery."

"And there has been treachery," said Frank, "of the most approved Spanish kind."

With this Frank told them of his experience with the torpedo boat. They cheered when they learned that it was sunk.

"But the rascals themselves!" cried Swinton. "If we could catch them, then we could solve the mystery."

"They have gone ashore over there."

"Then we will be after them," cried the detective.

"What puzzles me, though," said Ford, "is how our intentions to visit Havana, and the secret of the cipher leaked out. Is there a traitor among us?"

All looked at Ford. None were more earnest than Clark.

"If there is, he will hang himself with his own rope," he said.

Swinton scowled and turned about. Frank saw at once that something was wrong. But he kept his counsel.

Arrangements were quickly made.

Swinton and his men went ashore to give chase to the Spanish plotters. Clark, May and Ford remained on board the Filibuster.

Then Ford told Frank all.

He told of the sending of the genuine cipher dispatch, and of the journey of himself and his companions down to Readestown.

"You can't know how dazed we were when we learned that you had gone to keep this appointment," he said. "We knew then that our plans had been betrayed and gave you up for lost."

"Do you think the Spanish officers are apprised of our intention?" asked Frank.

"I do!"

"It is very strange. Your confab must have been overheard."

"It is possible, but the cipher——"

"Ah!"

Frank whistled slowly and Ford smothered a cough. Clark was approaching and now joined in the conversation.

"It will make little difference," he said, glibly. "Havana will never know anyway just when we enter the harbor. She cannot see us and of course, will know nothing about it."

By this time the Filibuster was far out to sea.

Frank now spoke of the Vizcaya. Clark seemed to be greatly interested and asked many questions about the boarding of the war ship by unknown passengers.

"Did you see a woman among them?" he asked, eagerly.

"Not that I remember of," replied Frank.

"Ah! Well, no matter. There is a very shrewd Spanish woman on spy duty in the United States now. Doubtless those who boarded the war ship were spies going back to Havana. Too bad you did not sink them all."

"I had no right to molest them," said Frank.

"Certainly not! But oh, if it was only a time of war, how easy it would have been to have blown the keel of that Vizcaya out."

"You are getting blood hungry," said Frank, with a laugh.

"My blood boils when I think of the affronts our people have stood from those ignorant Spaniards. They deserve a lesson."

"They will get one fast enough. I hope that Swinton will catch the rascals. But I fear he will not."

Clark strolled away again, and Ford whispered:

"Does that fellow look or act like a spy?"

Frank was amazed.

"By no means!" he said:

"Well, that is what our great detective, Swinton, thinks, anyway. You know there is a reason why his interest ought to be with Spain."

"What is the reason?"

"He has a Spanish wife in Havana!"

"Now you speak of it," said Frank, slowly, "the fellow does look a counterfeit. Very likely he is the snake in the grass."

"I cannot believe it. Clark seems such a manly, noble fellow."

"We will not judge him."

"Very true? But Swinton says that Clark had formed a friendly alliance with a woman whom he half believes is the original woman spy, once in the employ of Weyer. You mark that just now he asked very anxiously if there was a woman in the party which boarded the Vizcaya."

"You are right," said Frank, thoughtfully. "But if this Clark was under the least shadow of suspicion he should not have been put upon this commission."

"In one sense you are right. But the Secretary of the Navy named Clark before any suspicion arose, and he was considered a valuable man as being familiar with Spanish life. It would have been foolish to have relieved him from duty on the commission after his appointment, as he can be more closely watched now than as if he were at liberty."

CHAPTER IV.

A STRANGE ACCIDENT.

FRANK READE, JR., felt strangely uneasy. It was not a reassuring thing to reflect upon, that they were bound upon a perilous secret mission with a traitor in their midst, and the probability that the Spanish government had already been put upon its guard.

This was facing odds which were by no means easily discounted.

Had it been earlier in the game, Frank would have discarded the undertaking to resort to some other. But they were already upon the high seas.

Therefore the best plan was certainly to push ahead.

It increased the peril of the project, but Frank hoped to surmount this.

Of all the voyagers, Ensign Clark seemed to be the most interested in the submarine boat.

He visited the engine room and studied the dynamos, and investigated all the mechanism of the boat.

He was exceedingly complimentary to the young inventor.

"You are the most wonderful of Americans, Mr. Reade," he said. "Nobody has yet invented anything to excel this boat."

Frank made modest replies and continued to watch the suspected traitor closely.

Steadily southward the Filibuster kept on her way. At last they turned into the Florida channel, and it was known that they were but a few hours from Havana.

The nervous strain now begun. Speed was slackened and a method of procedure was discussed.

Sails were sighted, which were believed to belong to Spanish cruisers and gun-boats, patrolling the channel, possibly to intercept the Filibuster.

When any of these became high on the horizon, Frank traveled under the surface until they were out of sight. This was a necessary precaution.

But of all the crew the lightest hearted and most unconcerned was Clark. One would have said that he was wholly without caution or fear.

"When we have taken up every mine and torpedo in Havana Harbor," he said, "we will send war ships there without further risk of being blown to atoms."

Matters, however, came to a head that very day.

Frank and Ford were in the cabin discussing plans. The Filibuster was sailing along at a fair pace, when suddenly there was a shock, the dynamos buzzed, the boat heeled half upon her side and then righted, and the propeller ceased to work.

The Filibuster drifted off in the trough of the sea, helpless and inactive. Frank rushed out on deck, and Barney came out of the pilot house.

"What is the matter, Barney?" asked the young inventor.

"Shure, sor, I think something is wrong with the machinery," replied the Celt.

There was some excitement. All were on deck now but Clark. He came slowly out of the after cabin with apparent surprise in every line of his face.

"What is wrong?" he cried. "I thought we were run down."

Ford glanced at him, but said nothing. Lieutenant May alone made answer.

"We hope to soon learn what the trouble is. It may be an accident to the machinery."

"That is too bad!" cried Clark, with apparent honest concern. "It will make us late into Havana Harbor, and give the Vizcaya's people time to spread the news of our coming."

Nobody had thought of this, and the result was something like a shock. But Frank had already started down into the cabin.

He made his way quickly into the engine room. He was but a few moments in locating the trouble.

Between the cogs of two of the power wheels he found a twisted iron spike. This had thrown one of the wheels off its pivot and broken a parallel bar of steel.

This, while not a necessarily fatal injury to the machinery, meant delicate repair work by the replacing of the rod and readjusting the wheel.

Frank was confident that he could repair the damage all right, but this was not the question which seemed to him the most grave.

How had the spike managed to get between the cogs. It could not well have fallen there for no shelf was near. Had human hands placed it there?

The thought brought a cold sweat out upon Frank. Was there actually a traitor in their midst?

Up to this moment he had given Clark the benefit of the doubt. But now he felt that the crisis had arrived.

Removing the twisted spike he carried it on deck. Frank approached the three officers with the spike in his hand.

His manner was serious.

"Gentlemen," he said, "here is a subject for investigation. This spike was found between the cogs of the power wheels. Nothing short of human agency can account for its being there!"

A silence like that of the grave ensued for a moment.

All three of the naval officers stared at the spike. As usual, the voluble Clark was the first to speak.

"Impossible! There is no one on board who would do such a thing!"

"Nothing is impossible," replied Frank, in a steely voice. "The fact remains that it was done."

"Both of your men look honest," said Clark. "Which do you suspect?"

"Neither," replied Frank, tersely.

Lieutenant Clark gave a start, and then glanced at his companions with a frank, amused smile.

"It is plain he suspects one of us, then. Are you guilty, Ford?"

"No, sir," replied Ford, stiffly.

Clark now grew serious; he drew himself up and flashed a glance at the solemn faces of the others. His hand rested on his sword hilt.

"Ah," he said, slowly; "I see where the shoe pinches. You suspect me!"

"Why mask longer?" cried May, hotly. "Yes, ensign, we suspect you, and you must admit that we have good grounds for it."

"Lieutenant May, have a care," said Clark, angrily. "This matter may go so far that it cannot be settled in words."

"I am ready to settle it in any other way," declared the lieutenant, hotly.

"First acquaint me with your reasons for thinking that I put that spike in the machinery?"

"For the same reason that you gave the Spanish woman in the Eb-bitt House, information which has since reached the ears of the Spanish government. You were seen to do this! You are a traitor! Woe to you, Ensign Clark!"

The ensign's face turned deadly pale. His eyes, half shut, glowed like coals of fire, and he took a half step forward.

The next instant his glove crossed Lieutenant May's face with a resounding slap.

"You are a liar!" he gritted. "If you are a man you will resent this!"

Straight out from May's shoulder went a direct blow. The next instant the villain went down like a felled ox.

He was quickly up, but in an instant Frank had him by the arms. He would have run his assailant through with his sword but for this.

Madly he fumed and fought for a few moments. But he was quickly bound and then rendered *hors du combat*.

Finding that he was helpless he ceased his raving and became calm and cynical. Not a word was spoken to him by his accusers.

But Frank called Barney and Pomp.

"Take this fellow below," he said, with sharp command. "Place him in state-room five, and see to it that he does not escape."

Clark was led below. Frank turned to Ford and May, and said:

"What is to be done with him?"

For a moment both officers were silent.

Then Ford said:

"That is a conundrum. We shall be in luck if we meet a U. S. war ship. It would quickly rid us of him."

"Have we sufficient evidence to defend our case against him?"

"I believe we have."

"Then we should have nothing to fear," said Frank. "There is no doubt of his treachery."

"Swinton was right."

"If only the detective was here now to take charge of him."

"We might put into Key West."

"No," said Ford, decidedly. "That would never do. Our conduct now must be secret even from our own countrymen. Key West is alive with newsmongers who are after every bit of information that they can get. The expedition we are upon would be branded to the world."

"You are right," agreed Frank. "That plan is not at all feasible. There is only one thing we can do, and that is hold Clark a prisoner on board until we make our return."

"That is our best plan, much as I would like to be rid of him," declared Ford.

And so the matter was decided.

The traitor was placed in state-room five, and the window and door were barred. It did not seem possible for him to attempt an escape.

This accomplished, Frank turned his attention to the broken machinery.

Fortunately the sea was not rough, and the Filibuster was provided with two good masts.

Sails were spread to steady her and keep her out of the trough of the sea. Then work was begun on the machinery.

The portable forge was rigged up, and the broken parallel was repaired. Fortunately Frank had foreseen the possibility of a breakage, and extra pieces of machinery were stored in the hold.

These were brought out, and a new wheel was placed in position. Once more the Filibuster was able to travel.

It was a matter of general congratulation that the accident was no worse. Beyond the delay, no great harm had been done.

Once more the Filibuster got under way. Slowly and steadily she crept to the southward.

Ships were sighted, but they were far distant and bore no resemblance to Spanish vessels. So they were not heeded.

Suddenly Barney cried:

"Land ho!"

Frank sprung to the conning tower. He leveled his glass with a strange thrill. There was visible on the horizon a long, dark line. It was land beyond doubt.

"Cuba!" exclaimed Ford.

"We are close to Havana," declared May. "It is singular that no Spanish war vessel has been met."

"We may see one before we get through," said Ford, grimly.

"Rest assured of that fact. We know the Vizcaya, at least, is in Havana."

CHAPTER V.

AMONG THE SUNKEN MINES.

"No doubt she is!" agreed May. "This expedition has been unfortunate. Very likely every Spaniard on earth knows of it by this time."

"Why should they?" asked Frank.

"You may be sure that Clark has let them know before this, if not by personal word, at least through that mysterious woman of the Ebbitt House."

This was certainly a dampening conviction. But Frank said:

"No doubt information has reached them. Yet they may not be morally certain. They have not seen the Filibuster, nor will they know when it enters Havana."

"Good!" cried Ford. "We have the best of them there."

"But you may be sure they will line Havana Harbor with mines," declared May.

"Let them do so!" cried Frank. "We can easily spoil that game. In fact, is not our purpose to deal with these same mines?"

This settled the question. All felt reassured and realized that after all it made but little difference to them whether the Spaniards knew of their purpose or not.

How the latter could do them harm it was not easy to see. In fact, it was the Spaniards which needed to fear for their lives.

Nearer, and still cautiously the little submarine boat crept to the distant line of land. Frank had made a course to sail directly into Havana Harbor.

But soon a long line of black smoke appeared on the horizon. A dark hull rose from the waves.

It was easy with a glass to see that this was a war vessel.

That it was a Spanish gun-boat there was no doubt. Frank placed his hand on the tank lever.

He watched the distant vessel anxiously. Then he said suddenly:

"We shall be seen if we allow her to approach nearer. It is better to go to the bottom at once."

"That is right," declared Ford. "We should take no chances."

"Nor will we," declared Frank.

All were in the cabin, and the doors and windows were hermetically sealed. Frank pressed the valve.

Down settled the submarine boat. The electric lights were turned on, and soon the bed of the ocean was seen.

It was a beautiful spectacle.

These semi-tropical seas were rich with coral and beautiful shells. Beautiful fish swam about in translucent water.

As the Filibuster sped on over this magnificent scene, rendered doubly beautiful in the glare of the electric lights, the submarine voyagers expressed themselves with rapture.

"Truly, the deep sea holds many wonders," cried Lieutenant May.

"On my word, Mr. Reade, this submarine boat is the most wonderful invention of modern times!"

Frank made a modest reply. Barney and Pomp brought out, one a fiddle and the other a banjo, and held a musicale in the cabin.

Thus, the submarine boat drew nearer to the harbor of Havana.

Finally Frank slackened speed.

The fact that the water was getting greener and heavier was clear evidence that they were nearing land. In fact Ford declared:

"You can almost distinguish some of the filth of the harbor in these waters. I suppose the harbor of Havana is one of the filthiest in the world."

"Ugh!" exclaimed May. "It is not a pleasant thought that we must wallow in it."

"I trust we shall not come in contact with it personally," said Frank. "I think we need not fear that."

"How, otherwise, shall we be able to remove the mines?"

"You shall see in due time," replied the young inventor. "I cannot explain now."

The search-light was now employed and the boat moved forward with the greatest caution.

Too much care could not be exercised.

It was at best difficult to recognize a wire in those dark waters, and contact with one might mean not only the explosion of one or more wires, but the destruction of their own vessel.

So the Filibuster fairly crept along the harbor bottom. Everyone of the voyagers strained his eyes to, if possible, locate a sunken mine.

Just their exact location in the harbor they could only guess.

That they were fairly in the mouth of the harbor, though, Frank felt sure. It was reasonable to suppose that they must soon find electric wires.

Suddenly Barney pressed the lever which brought the boat to a stop. A dark, shapeless object was visible just ahead. Keenly it was scrutinized.

"What do you make of it?" asked Lieutenant May.

"It is a rock," declared Ford.

"Draw nearer slowly, Barney."

The Celt obeyed.

Frank then focused the light upon the strange object. Then the outlines of a vessel half buried in the sands were seen.

"A sunken wreck!" ejaculated Ford.

All drew a breath of relief.

"That is just what it is," agreed May. "Some unfortunate vessel, perhaps the victim of a sudden leak."

"The harbor no doubt is full of such derelicts!"

"That may explain it," said Frank, gravely. "Yet ships rarely sink in harbors to remain intact. Usually the hulk is blown up to remove the possible obstruction which it may be."

"That is true!" agreed Ford. "But surely you do not think it is placed here by design?"

"Draw a trifle nearer, Barney," commanded the young inventor.

Slowly the submarine boat approached the sunken wreck. It was well that care was used.

For the nose of the Filibuster suddenly struck against a slender wire which seemed to lead down from the bowsprit of the sunken vessel.

"Back water!" shouted Frank.

Barney obeyed. The Filibuster recoiled. In that instant all expected an explosion.

But it did not come.

The wire, if it connected with a mine, evidently depended upon an electric spark and not its own tension for the exploding of the dynamite.

The Filibuster slid back a few paces. Then all drew a deep breath.

"Our first experience," declared Ford, regaining his color. "We must profit by it."

"That we must," agreed Frank. "But now you may understand that this derelict vessel was sunk here by design."

"You are right. It is probably a mine in itself."

"That may be, but I regard it as a sort of radiating point for electric wires. If the truth was known, I will wager there is a buoy on the surface to indicate its position."

"Then you think we have made an important discovery?"

"I do."

The two naval officers were feverish with excitement. They were ready for anything, and the suspense was to them most unpleasant.

"What shall we do?" asked May.

"Destroy the wires," replied Frank.

"Can we do it safely?"

"Certainly."

"Suppose the mine blows up——"

"Suppose you were shot in battle?"

"Just so! That was a foolish question. It is one of the chances of war. But have we a right to destroy these wires?"

"Yes; they are not only a menace to American vessels, but all others. We have lost one battle ship by them, and it is high time they were removed for common safety."

"What if Spain should attempt to remove torpedoes from the channel in front of Fort Hamilton, New York Harbor?"

"If we had blown up one of her war vessels there, we could find no fault; she would be right."

"That is true enough; at any rate, if we cut the wires it will be enough."

"Certainly."

"But how are we going to do that?"

"I will show you."

Frank opened a locker in the cabin, and took from it several divers' helmets.

These were supplemented with knapsacks, strapped to the back. In each one of these knapsacks there was a chemical generator, which furnished air to the helmet for an indefinite length of time.

"Who will put on a diver's suit?" asked Frank. "I do it for one!"

"A diver's suit!" exclaimed Ford. "Where is your air-pump and life line?"

"Such a thing is not used!" replied Frank, and then he explained the mechanism of the diving-suits. The two naval officers listened with wonderment.

"Another wonderful invention," cried Ford. "Really, Mr. Reade, you are the greatest man in America to-day!"

"That is not the question before us," said Frank. "We must explore that sunken wreck. Who is going with me?"

"Both of us, of course!" cried Ford.

Frank gave Barney and Pomp their directions to remain aboard the Filibuster, until the divers should return.

Then he donned the helmet and equipped himself with a long knife, a hatchet and a wire cutter.

Ford and May did the same. Then they entered the vestibule which led to the deck.

Frank closed the cabin door, and turning a valve flooded the vestibule with water.

Next he opened the door leading out on the deck, and they were in the waters of Havana Harbor.

But their diving-suits and rubber gloves, prevented actual contact with it as Frank had promised.

The young inventor was the first to slide over the rail and start across to the wreck.

He was followed by the officers. Progress was necessarily slow, but after a while they reached the side of the wreck.

On the way they cut the wire which the nose of the Filibuster had encountered. But Frank picked up the end of it and followed it to the wreck.

Over the sunken vessel's rail it led, and to the companionway. There were battered stairs leading down into this.

The divers had electric lamps on their helmets, so they did not fear to enter the cabin of the derelict.

Down into the cabin they went, following the wire. Frank Reade, Jr., led the way.

They beheld an astonishing spectacle in the cabin.

CHAPTER VI.

BARNEY AND POMP HAVE SOME FUN.

BARNEY and Pomp were left alone aboard the submarine boat for the first time.

For a long time their animal spirits had been pent-up, until now this golden opportunity was offered to relax them.

Of course, they were interested in the mystery of the sunken vessel, but they knew it would be some while before the divers would return.

In the meanwhile, the chance afforded for skylarking was too good to lose sight of.

And they embraced it.

It was an unusual thing for Barney to invade Pomp's cooking gal-

ley. It was tantamount to an invitation for trouble, for Pomp considered it privileged ground.

On the other hand, the coon seldom ventured into the pilot house unless sent there by Frank. Barney was master of that position.

But on this occasion Barney lit a cigarette and strolled lightly and boldly down into the galley.

Pomp was desiccating some choice canned meat, and was not in the very best sort of a humor. If there was one thing he hated, it was the odor of a cigarette.

"De man wha' will smoke one ob dem little paper fings ain' no kind ob a man!" he declared. "He am jes' a big stuff, an' yo' kin write it in yo' hat."

It was like waving a red flag before a mad bull then for Barney to appear thus.

The coon gave him a cold stare and a sniff. But the Celt wore a provoking smile.

"I thought I'd cum down an' see yez, naygur," he said, cheerfully.

"Won't yez have a smoke?"

He thrust a package of the offensive cigarettes up under Pomp's nose. For a moment the coon seemed convulsed with an ague fit.

But it was only wrath that upset him.

"Kerchoo! Whishi! Choo! Wha' yo' tryin' to do, I'ish? Yo' know I kain't bear de smell ob dem fings!"

"Shure, I'm sorry," said the Celt, opening his mouth nonchalantly, and with apparent unconcern blowing a prodigious cloud of the smoke into the coon's face.

Pomp dropped his plate of desiccated beef and nearly strangled with the sickening fumes. By way of increasing the fun, Barney sent another cloud of smoke into his face.

This was too much.

Even Pomp's pacific disposition was compelled to yield.

He let out a howl like that of a dervish, and at the same moment made a biff at Barney. The Celt retreated, but Pomp lowered his head and unceremoniously rammed him in the stomach.

The Celt went down in a heap and the coon on top of him. The cigarette was hurled into the innocuous desuetude of the flour barrel while the two jokers closed in a genuine old fashioned ruction.

The way they tugged and panted about the galley floor was a caution to wrestlers.

In their fantastic gyrations they upset the flour barrel over themselves. Then a bucket of melted grease emptied itself upon them. Cooking soda and extracts, spices and meats went flying in all directions. It was what might have been called literally, a hot old time.

Their own mothers would not have known them, when they finally desisted long enough to get upon their feet.

Then Barney let out a roar of derisive laughter.

"Shure, it's a whoite man yez are fer onct in yer loife, naygur," he cried.

"It am yo' doin's, sah," cried Pomp, angrily. "Yo' kin jest tremble if Marse Frank finds it out."

"Yez are the one to blame, yesilf. Yez sthruck the furst blow."

"G'long dar, chile. Yo' blow dat smoke in mah face jes' on puppus to git me mad."

"Yez ought to loike it."

"I kin tole yo' dat I don' like it, an' yo' kin bet I don' stan' it again. De next time yo' might say yo' prayers, sah, fo' yo'll hab need ob dem."

Barney roared and Pomp made another biff at him. But the Celt had had enough and retreated to his own state-room, where he washed and cleaned himself up. Then he went into the pilot house and took a look at the sunken wreck.

As he did so, he gave a great shout of amazement. The sight which he beheld chilled his blood.

Meanwhile Frank and the two naval officers had reached the sunken vessel, and as we have seen had entered the cabin to behold a most astonishing spectacle.

The cabin floor was covered with cans of dynamite with a wire attached to each.

It was mine sufficient to blow up the whole of Morro Castle, to say nothing of a single war ship.

The adventurers gazed upon the scene with amazement.

To speak under water it was necessary for divers to place their helmets close together.

This was done, and May shouted:

"It is lucky for some vessel that we have cut the connection with this terrific engine of destruction."

"What did they place so much dynamite here for?" cried Ford.

"They did not require so much."

"I can see why," said Frank. "It was necessary to destroy this old hulk, as well as the vessel above, at the same time, so that if possible no trace might be left behind of the cause."

"Yet they might have located the mine somewhere else?"

"This may be the most advantageous spot. There may be other reasons of which we cannot think just now."

All theories, however, were futile. The fact yet remained that the dynamite was here. What was to be done with it?

It might now remain forever where it was without danger of explosion. But Frank realized that the Spaniards might recover it and use it in some other quarter.

So he suggested that it be spilled from the cans, and the shifting motion of the water would soon scatter it beyond recall.

This idea was accepted by the naval officers as a good one, and it was carried out.

Every can was opened and the dynamite scattered. Then they proceeded to take a look over the ship.

She was of ancient build, and had probably rested in the harbor for over one hundred years. Her timbers were falling to decay.

She was of the old-fashioned galley type, and carried quite a number of old-fashioned guns. On the surface she would have been a veritable curiosity.

After examining the derelict thoroughly, the explorers returned to the deck. And now a great surprise awaited them.

Just as they were about to go over the rail, something came sliding down through the water over their heads.

The next moment a man's figure landed on the deck. He was dressed in the ordinary diver's suit, with life line and all.

He carried an electric light upon his helmet, and as he struck the deck he looked about him with amazement. He was evidently dazed at sight of the unknown divers.

For a moment he seemed about to signal for a recall to the surface. But just then four other divers came sliding down.

This seemed to reassure him, and he made startled gestures to his companions.

Lieutenant Ford placed his helmet against Frank's and shouted:

"We are betrayed! Our game is up."

"By no means!" replied Frank. "They can do us no harm. We have more freedom of movement."

"But the whole Spanish Government will be by the ears over this now."

"Let them! They have as yet no proof of our identity."

The Spanish divers now advanced threateningly, making motions for the Americans to surrender.

By way of reply Frank slid over the rail, and the two lieutenants followed him.

The Spanish divers followed and made blows at the Americans. But these were parried, and the latter made for the submarine boat.

With their greater freedom of movement, Frank knew that it would have been easy to annihilate the whole gang. But this he did not care to do.

It would mean the shedding of blood, and might at once precipitate hostilities between Spain and America. It was distinctly against his orders to incur this risk.

So they continued to retreat to the submarine boat. They easily distanced the Spaniards, and soon were again on board the Filibuster.

As they burst into the cabin, they were met excitedly by Barney and Pomp.

"Whurroo! We were jist about to thrain the electhric gun on the omadhouns, sor! Shure, we thought they wud overtake yez!"

"There is no fear of that," declared Frank. "Their life lines will not allow them to go far."

"Golly," cried Pomp, "yo' didn't count on dere comin', Marse Frank!"

"Indeed no," replied the young inventor. "It was a strange coincidence, but I do not think it will spoil our chances. We will yet fool them."

"Had we not better slide away from this locality?" asked May.

"Just as quickly as we can. There is no knowing when they may drop a torpedo down upon us."

Frank threw off his helmet and rushed into the pilot house. He sent the submarine boat ahead, and in a jiffy the divers and the sunken wreck were out of sight.

As soon as this became a fact, Frank checked the speed of the Filibuster for there was no telling what moment they might run against a torpedo or sunken mine.

The Filibuster came almost to a halt, and the search-light again went flashing in every direction.

Suddenly Lieutenant May cried:

"I see a train of mines. There are the wires and the mines themselves lying on the harbor bottom."

This was seen to be the truth. It did not take long for the submarine boat to range alongside.

CHAPTER VII.

BARNEY AND POMP GO ASHORE.

FRANK made provisions to cut these wires. Again he donned his diving-suit as did May and Ford.

Then they went out again upon the muddy bottom of the harbor.

With their wire cutters they traveled from one mine to another. It did not take long to make the mines useless.

The submarine boat kept alongside. Then it was seen that other mines lay beyond.

The statement that Havana Harbor was literally covered with a net work of explosives was seen to be a fact. No war ship in the world could have hoped to pass over these destroyers in safety.

"Whew!" exclaimed Ford, after an hour's work. "We have struck an endless job, I fear. The Spaniards meant to make Havana Harbor impregnable."

"True!" agreed Frank. "It would have been difficult for a war ship to have anchored anywhere here but over a mine."

"It is no wonder we lost a battle ship."

"You are right!"

"But Spain will find that that piece of treachery will cost her dear!"

"We will at least fix matters so that she will not be able to blow up another right away!"

"I don't know," said May, dubiously. "We are only destroying the connections. Those can be restored by their divers."

This was true.

Yet, though the work might be temporary, it would prove many things. Again the Spaniards would be put to some trouble.

The proper and best method would doubtless have been to remove the mines bodily.

But it would have required a derrick to have lifted many of them. Moreover, for that matter the mines themselves could be replaced.

If it was really a time of war this might have been done with profit. But as it was, the best method just now was simply to cut the wires.

So the submarine explorers were content to confine themselves wholly to this operation. At some future time they might make the damage more permanent. At least it would convince the insolent Spaniards that the Yankees were wide awake.

From one mine to another they crept, and soon reached a number of submerged torpedoes.

These were suspended just half way between the surface and the bottom of the harbor by means of an air chamber. They were of the floating pattern, so-called, and unlike any that the naval officers had ever seen before.

May and Ford examined them curiously, and the latter said:

"It may have been this sort of a torpedo which blew up our battle ship."

Connections were cut with these torpedoes, and at length a dark object was seen just overhead. By flashing their helmet lights upward our explorers recognized the keel of a vessel.

They were in shallow water, and consequently near the shore.

With this discovery Frank said:

"Let us follow this wire for a ways toward the shore. It is possible that we may be able to rise above the surface and take a look at the harbor."

The two naval officers at once fell in with this idea.

They followed Frank who took the wire as a guide. Soon the fact became apparent that they were nearing the shore. The grade was upward, and now they could look upward through the water and see the sky.

A few moments later they cautiously raised their heads above the surface, and looked about.

It was seen in a few moments that their fears were groundless. The shore here was a lonely spot upon a point of land from which a good view of Havana and Morro Castle could be had.

But no habitation was near. Only a cliff overgrown with vegetation. A small sandy strip of beach was at its base.

The vessel, whose keel they had seen was a Spanish gun-boat anchored just beyond the point.

The three divers drew themselves out of the water and surveyed the situation.

There were many vessels in the harbor. They easily sighted the Vizcaya and the Alfonso XII., as well as the wreck of the sunken battle ship.

The sun was just dipping in the western sea, and night was coming on.

For a time the divers surveyed the scene, then Frank said:

"This will not do. We must return to the Filibuster."

"What if we should lose our way?" suggested Ford.

Frank shrugged his shoulders.

"I think that hardly possible," he said. "We have the electric wire to guide us."

Back into the water they slid. Down once more into the depths they went, following the mine wire.

Soon they saw the search-light of the Filibuster and knew that they were safe.

As they had cut all the wires in sight, it was decided to return to the Filibuster for a rest. Then Frank thought of approaching the Spanish war ship, and to explore that part of the harbor.

They were soon on board again. Barney and Pomp were interested in the report they gave, and the Celt cried:

"Shure, I'd like to take a stroll on the shore mesilf, Mистер Frank. Wud yez be afther letting the naygur and mesilf get out an stretch our legs."

Frank looked up in surprise.

"Do you know what a risk that would be?" he asked.

"Shure, sor, we'll look out fer ourselves. An' yez say there's no wan on that part av the coast at all?"

Frank inwardly felt averse to granting the request. But Pomp joined in with Barney and they were so persistent that he finally yielded.

"You may go on one condition," he said; "use the utmost care, be sure and not lose your way and return in two hours."

"All roight, sor."

"We are tired and propose to have a little sleep."

"To be sure, sor!"

"We're gwine to do wha' yo' say, Marse Frank!" cried Pomp.

And the two jokers, consumed with joy, bounded away to don their diving helmets and start out upon their expedition.

It did not take them long to get ready.

Soon they were equipped and entered the vestibule. To them it was a great treat.

Frank had given them explicit directions where to go. These they carefully heeded.

Once in the waters of the harbor, they looked for and found the guiding wire as directed by Frank.

Following this, they could not help but eventually reach the shore. When they drew themselves out of the water, however, all was silvery moonlight about them.

It did not take them long to remove their helmets.

"Whurroo!" cried the Celt, as he drank in the balmy air, "shure, it's a foine snap we have, naygur!"

"Golly, yo' kin jes' bet, honey! We am in de tropics dis time!"

Barney turned a flip-flap in the soft sands, and Pomp did the same. They tumbled around on the beach for a while.

Then the Celt said:

"Shure, I'd loike to take a look at the counthry ferninst that cliff!"

"Wha' yo' say if we do, chile?"

"Misther Frank mebbe wouldn't loike it!"

"Huh! don' believe he would keer a cent if we didn' git into no trubble."

"Kin yez kape out av thrubble yesilf, naygur?"

"As well as yo'."

"Thin it's over the cliff we'll go. We'll hoide these divin' helmets in the cliff here an' be off!"

This they did, and soon they had climbed the ascent. The moonlight made all as bright almost as day.

They could see canebrakes far beyond. In the foreground was a curious little hut.

For a while the two jokers were content to gaze upon this scene.

Then curiosity again began to assert itself, and they discussed the feasibility of a trip of discovery as far as the hut.

They became imbued with a mad desire to investigate this.

"Begorra, I'll risk it av yez will," declared the Celt.

"Yo' kin bet I will!"

"It looks to me as if the hut was uninhabited, anyway," declared Barney.

"Suah nuff, sah! Wha' yo' sa, '"

"Go an!"

Together they set out for the hut. They had soon covered the intervening distance.

As they approached, all seemed silent and dark in the hut. But when within a few paces of it, a faint gleam of light showed through the curtained window.

"Howly smoke," whispered Barney, clutching Pomp's sleeve, "some wan is in there!"

"Golly! Wha' yo' fink?"

"Bejabers, I'm goin' to risk wan look, anyway!"

The Celt applied his eye to the crack in the curtain. He could see the whole interior of the hut.

It was rudely furnished. A small fire-place was flanked with piles of fagots. A table sat against the wall, with a bottle and glasses on it.

Two chairs were drawn up to it. A couch with heavy blankets on it was near.

No person was in the cabin.

All this was revealed in the light of a rude lantern hung from the ceiling.

It might be the habitation of some negro canebraker, or possibly one of the rural class of Cubans. Barney took in all the details.

Then his gaze rested upon the bottle. It was a suspicious, long necked bottle, and he recognized its character.

"Be jabers there's no wan at home," he declared. "But they've been koind enuff to lave a bit av a nip av comfort to any strhay visitor. It's civil people live here, naygur."

"Golly! I allus done heah dat de Cubans war a mos' 'spitable class ob people."

"Yez did, eh?"

"Yah."

"That settles it thin. I'll take yure worrud fer it, naygur, an' it's a dhrive at that same hospitality I'll be afther thryin'."

The two jokers did not drain the bottle, for that would not have been polite. But they satisfied their thirst quite liberally.

The hot fluid warmed their vitals and loosened their tongues. They sat down by the fire and toasted their shins.

"Shure we'll wait here fer the gintlemanly proprietor to return, an' thin 'ebbe he'll foind us somethin' better. At laist we kin be afther thankin' him, be that token."

"A'right, I'ish!" agreed Pomp. "We hab got anoder hour fo' to git back to de Filibuster."

"Shure, there's plinty av toime."

Ten minutes passed.

Barney had been assailed with another temptation to take another drink. But before he could yield to it a curious sound was heard.

The galloping of horses smote upon the air and the distant crack of guns. It was a regular fusillade as if a battle was in progress.

In a moment alarm most direful seized the two jokers. Barney turned deadly pale, while nothing showed of Pomp's eyes but the whites.

"Howly Murther!" gasped the Celt. "The bloody Spaniards are comin'."

"We am done fo'!" groaned Pomp. "Wha' will Marse Frank say?"

"Shure, we must git out av this!"

"We kain't!"

This was proven true by a glance out at the window. Dark forms were swarming toward the cabin.

For a moment the two terrified jokers ran about the hut like rats in a trap.

Then suddenly Barney spied some rafters, and a small, straw-filled loft.

"Up there!" he gasped. "Hide in the straw, naygur, an' may the devil take yez if yez make a noise."

It required but an instant for them to draw themselves up into the loft. The next moment the door of the hut burst open.

Two men, dressed in the gaudy Spanish uniform, burst into the circle of firelight. They were officers of the Spanish army.

One of them grasped the bottle on the table and took a draught. The other threw off his sword and cast himself upon the couch.

They spoke in Spanish, which Barney and Pomp could not understand.

But it needed not words to convince the two watchers that these men had been here before.

The startling truth was apparent.

The hut was an outpost or rendezvous for a Spanish coastguard. By the purest of chance the two jokers had stumbled into it without being seen.

They were now in a scrape such as they by no means relished.

Should they be discovered it would be indeed difficult for them to explain their position, to the satisfaction of their captors.

Knowing the Spanish hatred of Americans, it was doubtful if they would escape with their lives. In any event nothing short of Morro Castle would be their fate.

So it is needless to say that they kept dark and shady indeed in their hiding place. It behooved them to look for the first avenue of escape.

Outside they could hear the tramp of horses and the jests of the Spanish soldiers. It would be impossible to leave the hut as yet.

The two officers remained in the hut. One of them seated himself at the table and wrote in a note book for some while.

The other dropped off into a sound sleep on the couch. Thus an hour drifted by.

"Golly," whispered Pomp, "we ought to be back abo'd de Filibuster now! Mebbe Marse Frank won' gib it to us!"

"Howly mither! Don't spake av it!"

At this juncture, however, the door of the hut was suddenly flung open. Loud voices were heard, and into the hut came four Spanish soldiers, leading a bare-headed and bare-footed wretch, who was streaked with blood, and whose right arm hung powerless by his side.

Both officers sprung up and an excited scene followed.

As near as the two watchers in the loft could sense the situation, the poor fellow was an unfortunate Cuban caught in the canebrake, and whose sympathies were not with Spain.

Also a tell-tale paper was found on his person, which at once decided his fate.

Without ceremony he was stood up against the cabin door, and a bullet fired through his heart. Then his body was dragged like offal from the hut.

This made Barney and Pomp fairly crawl with horror. But yet they were powerless to interfere.

Probably a whole regiment of soldiers were about the hut. What would it avail them to interfere in behalf of the unfortunate wretch? Certainly nothing.

After this, the two officers held a hurried consultation over the captured paper. Then they buckled on their swords.

"Golly!" whispered Pomp. "Dey am goin' away agin. Dat will be our chance."

"Be jabers, that's so!"

The outlook now became brighter. It was plain that the Spanish officers were going to leave the hut.

One of them went up and kicked out the embers of the fire. The other gave a loud order to the soldiers without, and they were heard mounting their horses.

Then the lantern was taken down from the hook and extinguished. The officers went out, slamming the hut door after them.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE AFFAIR IN THE HUT.

WITH this Barney applied his shoulder to the door. It opened easily and at once.

The two jokers passed in, closing the door after them. Barney took a cautious look around first.

Then he kicked up the coals in the fire, warmed himself a bit, and reached out for the bottle. He applied his nose to the stopper.

"Whisky av I know it," he declared, and the next moment poured some of the fiery liquid down his throat. Pomp snatched it from him.

"Golly! don' be a big hog!" he puffed. "Gib yo' frien' a chaine."

A moment later the sound of the galloping hoofs died out in the distance. All was silent in the hut and about it.

The coast seemed clear, yet our two adventurers descended with all caution.

They crept to the door and opened it softly. The interval between the hut and the cliff was clear and bright in the moonlight.

They crept outside and listened in the shadow of the hut. Apparently none of the Spaniards had remained behind.

Decision was quickly made.

"Now, chile," said Pomp, drawing a deep breath. "Show what yo' am good fo'."

Straight for the cliff the two jokers dashed. They ran like deer until they reached the shore.

Whether they were pursued or seen they did not know or care. In less time than it takes to tell it they had clasped on their helmets and took to the water.

Down under the surface they plunged, and soon saw the light of the submarine boat before them.

Words cannot depict the relief with which they went over the rail and aboard the Filibuster once more.

Frank and the others were found asleep but they were soon astir, for Frank was anxious to lose no time, and two or three hours' sleep at an interval was all that was decided upon.

It was a thrilling story which Barney and Pomp told.

It was listened to with especial interest by the two naval officers. Then, of course, Frank read the venturesome jokers a lesson.

A new start in quest of other mines was now made.

The Filibuster crept cautiously away over the harbor bottom. For some while, she cruised about before a new discovery was made.

Then a strange and thrilling series of events occurred.

Frank now reckoned that they were well into the inner harbor.

The docks and the streets of Havana could not be far distant. Suddenly, Barney brought the submarine boat to a stop.

"Whisht!" he cried. "Phwat's that on ahead av us?"

"What is it?" asked Frank, coming into the pilot house.

"Shure, sor, it looks loike a broight loight."

"A light!" cried Lieutenant Ford. "What sort of a light?"

"By Jove! That is very strange," exclaimed Frank. "What could make a light as powerful as that under water?"

"Another submarine boat?"

"Or divers?"

"No!" said Frank, positively. "It can be neither. We will investigate."

The submarine boat came to a stop. Then Frank again brought out the diving helmets.

"Barney and Pomp!" he said, "you will remain aboard the Filibuster until we return. Ready gentlemen."

In a few moments Frank went over the rail accompanied by the two lieutenants.

They approached the strange light which made a peculiar halo in the water.

As they drew nearer, to their surprise they saw that it came from an aperture in the harbor bottom. The light glinted upward.

Steadily they approached this aperture.

Then they beheld an astounding spectacle. They looked down through heavy sections of glass into a stone passage below. Against the wall of this passage hung an electric lamp.

In an instant the truth flashed upon Frank.

He remembered that it was an ancient legend that Havana Harbor was undermined with passages leading from the city to Morro Castle and other points.

This was doubtless one of those secret passages.

For a moment a powerful desire was upon him to explore this passage. But an entrance could not be made.

He knew that it would doubtless carry them to the forts. He reflected that in time of war, the destruction of the glass would flood the mines and render them useless. But he resisted an impulse to do it now.

He imagined that these passages were more for the secret transportation of troops than for the purpose of blowing up the harbor.

They were secret means of communication between the forts, nothing more. Therefore they were not of such great importance.

So he said:

"We will not molest them. Nothing is to be gained. However, we will take the bearings and keep the record in case of future need!"

"Right!" agreed Ford. "We are not yet at war with Spain!"

The line of the passage was followed for some distance. But it could not be seen that there were any more lighted outlets like this.

What it had been constructed for was for a time a puzzle. Then Ford exclaimed:

"If I remember right, a sort of Martello Tower used to stand out here in the harbor, with a light upon it, ostensibly for mariners to light their way into the harbor. But very likely it was meant for an entrance to the passages."

"Just it!" exclaimed May. "There is the explanation no doubt!"

"Well," exclaimed Frank, "I cannot believe that we shall find any torpedoes or mines in this vicinity."

"No, they would endanger the passages."

"In that event we may as well go back to the Filibuster."

"All right."

The three divers turned to retrace their steps. They could see the distant outlines of the submarine boat in the glare of the search-light.

It was not fifty yards distant.

They had got about half the distance covered, when Ford gave a sharp exclamation:

"What is that?"

Then the three divers stood spell-bound; right before their eyes a strange thing was enacted.

The submarine boat gave a sudden leap upward and vanished towards the surface.

They were left in utter darkness, save for their helmet lights, at the bottom of the harbor.

For a moment all were stunned; then Ford cried:

"What can it mean?"

"Only that some accident has again happened to the machinery," said Frank.

"But the machinery was inactive."

"Very true! It is probably the accident which has put it into action."

The two lieutenants were horrified.

"Have no fears!" said Frank. "We are not lost, for if worst comes, we can find our way ashore."

CHAPTER IX.

A DARING ESCAPE.

BARNEY and Pomp had busied themselves with their respective duties after the departure of the three divers.

They had not once dreamed of possible danger, at least not from the interior of the boat.

Below in his cabin cell the villain, Clark, had been chafing in his confinement.

He had been anxiously expecting to be delivered up to the officers of some war ship and taken home for a naval trial.

While he was yet cool with the hardihood of all villains, he was by no means confident of the outcome of such a trial.

He knew that death was generally the fate of traitors. It chilled him to the marrow of his bones.

At the same time it endowed him with a desperation and a resolution which was almost supernatural.

He cudgled his brain repeatedly for some device of escape, some method of extrication from the scrape which he was in.

But nothing seemed to afford him even the ghost of a chance until he suddenly bethought himself of the steel springs of his bunk.

It did not take him long to remove one of these.

It had a rough edge almost like a saw. He whetted it on the other steel of the door bars and began work on one of the hinges.

He worked assiduously and almost constantly, for his captors came near him only at meal times.

This gave him an advantage and by dint of the hardest of work he soon had nearly severed one of the hinges.

He found that by completely severing it he could open the door far enough to be able to squeeze his way out.

A savage joy and a malignant hatred possessed him.

"Ah!" he gritted. "Now I will square accounts with them. They shall pay for it, and dearly."

Stealthily he crept out of the cabin and into the pilot house. Barney was in the gun-room below and Pomp was in the galley.

The villain paused one moment in the pilot house to make sure that the coast was clear.

He knew that if he did harm to the boat while she was under water, his life as well as those of the others would pay for it.

So he refrained from this. His plan of escape was quickly made.

He had carefully studied the keyboard and the mechanism of the boat once before.

Therefore, it was no difficult task for him to act with surety.

Advancing carefully he selected the key which he believed would close the tanks, and pressed it.

The result was not what he expected.

It was not the right key.

It set the alarm gong going at a furious rate; a curse escaped the lips of the spy and he pressed the next button.

This proved to be the right one.

The boat instantly shot upward to the surface. She came up like a cork right in the middle of the harbor, and not far distant from a number of vessels.

Barney and Pomp met each other in a rush up the cabin stairs.

"Fo' de lan's sake, chile, wha' am de mattah?" gasped the coon.

"Bejabers, I don't know," declared the Celt.

"Somefin's wrong!"

"Shure, yez are roight."

Then a terrific crash was heard, and the electric lights went out. Only the moonlight glinted through the windows of the boat.

Barney had nearly reached the pilot house door, when a dark form was hurled against him, and he went down in a heap.

The cabin door flew open, and the unknown rushed out on deck. There was a splash in the water, and then all was silent.

Barney regained his feet and rushed out upon the deck. Not a sign of any person could be seen.

Back he dashed into the pilot house. There were small electric

amps independent of the main dynamos. Barney turned on one of these.

The scene revealed was one past description.

It showed the vandal's hand. The key-board was a wreck.

In leaving the pilot house, the villain, Clark, to evade any pursuit, had seized an iron bar and smashed the board to fragments.

While the damage was not permanent still it was vexing, and would take some time to repair. Had all this occurred in daylight, the fate of the Filibuster would have been sealed.

But none of the ships in the harbor had seemed to notice the sudden and mysterious appearance of the Filibuster or her character.

Therefore, she was for the nonce safe. But Barney dashed down to Clark's state-room, and at once found a ready explanation of all.

The Celt was excited beyond measure. It was his impulse to give chase to Clark, who was, no doubt, swimming for the shore, with the imminent risk of being caught by a shark.

But Barney realized that the most important thing now was to return at once and rescue Frank and the two naval officers.

He went back to the pilot house. Pomp now understood matters as well as he did.

"Golly!" gasped the coon. "Dat was jes' de mos' reckless ting I eber did hear ob. Whoeber tink dat arnery cuss wud eber git out ob dat state-room dat a'way?"

"Bejabbers, it's a surprise ter me," declared Barney; "an' I'm afther thinkin' it'll be more av a one to Misther Frank!"

"Suah nuff!"

They now went rapidly to work trying to classify the wires and get the submarine boat to again answer to the electric current.

It was found, however, to be no light task. All the while, the Filibuster was drifting down towards the Spanish war ships.

"Golly!" muttered Pomp. "If dey should jes' take a notion fo' to turn a search-light on us it 'ud jes' be all up wid us, yo' bet!"

"Bejabbers thot's so!" agreed Barney. "Shure, I must git these wires straightened out, or else drop an anchor."

And all the while daylight was of course approaching.

Barney worked like a Trojan. Very rapidly he got the wires classified, and put a key to each, irrespective of any key-board, which could be improvised later.

At last he hit upon the wire which connected with the tank and at once sunk the boat. He already secured the propeller wire and the search-light connection.

These he turned on and the quest for Frank and the two lieutenants began.

Round and round the submarine boat sailed. But yet not a trace of the missing men.

Barney was discomfited.

"Be me sowl!" he cried; "it's a bad thing to lose thim. Shure, if they go ashore it's into the Spaniards' hands they may fall."

"Golly! we mus' find dem if it takes a week," declared Pomp.

So the quest went on.

As a matter of fact, Barney had hit upon the wrong locality. In the drifting about the harbor he had lost his correct bearings.

So the locality he was exploring was in quite another part of the harbor. It was therefore not to be wondered at that no trace was found of the missing men.

"Be me sowl!" cried the Celt, finally, "they must have gone ashore. Phwat shall we do?"

It was indeed a serious problem.

To appear on the surface in daylight with the Filibuster would be fatal. If the lost divers had gone ashore, how were they to rejoin the submarine boat?

It was no easy problem for Barney to solve.

CHAPTER X.

ON SHORE.

BARNEY was completely in a quandary. How could he communicate with Frank and the naval lieutenants, if they had really gone ashore?

Again, Clark, the escaped prisoner, would carry information to the Spaniards, and doubtless, torpedoes would be dropped in all parts of the harbor to drive the submarine invader out.

In that case Barney might have to put to sea.

He would at least not know what move to make until Frank should rejoin the boat. Finally he decided to search for the lighted gallery, and there settle down and wait for something to turn up.

Meanwhile, Frank and the lieutenants had waited for the return of the submarine boat from the surface, until they were sure that something had happened of a serious nature.

"The game is up," declared Ford. "Something has happened. Probably the boat has been captured."

"I cannot believe it!" said Frank. "Barney and Pomp are very reliable, and also very shrewd. They would exhaust every resource before being captured."

"Yet there can be no other reasonable theory."

Frank was forced to admit this. So finally he said:

"Very well. We will go ashore. At least we can see from there whether the boat is on the surface or not."

"So we can!"

Accordingly they set out for the shore. It was easy to tell where this was from the trend of the harbor bottom.

But it was a long, hard climb.

At times they were half buried in filthy mud, and raised such a commotion, that it was necessary to wait until the water settled before being able to go further.

But after a long while, they finally succeeded in reaching the shore.

They emerged upon a strip of sandy beach, back of which were rude cottages of fishermen and watermen. The darkness was that just before the dawn and they were not observed.

They removed their helmets and hid them in the water a few feet from the shore where they could easily recover them, if needed.

Then they strolled along the sand until they were beyond the point where was human habitation. They sought a niche in the cliff as a hiding place, and waited for the rapidly coming daylight to give them a sight of the sea.

They had not long to wait.

Swiftly the sky lit up, and soon the gloom faded from the face of the water. They could see across the harbor.

But no vessel was in sight, which answered the description of the Filibuster.

There were the Spanish war ships and gun-boats, and many other vessels, small and large, but none among them compared with the submarine boat.

The adventurers stared.

"That is queer!" said Frank.

"What has become of her?" exclaimed May. "If she was captured, she ought to be alongside some of the Spanish war ships."

"I should say so!"

"Perhaps," said Frank, with sudden thought, "Barney and Pomp have fixed her machinery, and gone back under the surface to look for us?"

The thing looked plausible.

"We came away too soon," declared Ford. "Let us go back. Our jig is up if we do not succeed in again getting aboard the Filibuster."

"I fear the game is up, anyway," declared May, despondently.

"By no means," cried Frank. "If the boat is all right and again under the surface, Barney and Pomp will leave no stone unturned to find us!"

"Then we had better go back!"

"By all means!"

So back they started for the water's edge. But just as they came out of the niche, a man stepped out of a crevice a short distance above.

He stopped instantly, face to face with them. His face was white and haggard, his manner that of exhaustion, and his clothes dripping with water.

For a moment the submarine voyagers stared at the fellow. Then a great cry escaped Ford's lips.

"By the justice!" he cried. "It is Ensign Clark!"

"Clark!" gasped May, as he started forward. "So it is. What are you doing here, man? Where is the Filibuster?"

"Forever sunk, I hope!" groaned the traitor. "Stand from my way! I am desperate and not to be retaken!"

"One question," cried Frank. "How did you come here?"

"By my own strategy," retorted the villain. "Does that answer you?"

"Ah, now I understand," cried the young inventor. "You are the chap who caused the Filibuster to go to the surface. You must have then leaped overboard and swam ashore!"

"As you choose!" said Clark, coldly. "I am entitled to my liberty. When I get back to the United States I mean to have you all hauled over the coals for entrapping me and trying to saddle a charge upon me of which I am innocent."

"Liar!" cried Ford, forcibly. "You intend to go at once into the city and see the woman with whom you are conspiring, and whom I believe to be your wife."

Clark's face was livid.

"Take care," he gritted. "I have been insulted too often."

"If the truth insults you, then you have," said May, coldly. "But I don't believe it is policy for us to let you go to Havana."

Clark's lips curled.

"What can you do to prevent it?" he asked.

"We can hold you here, and send for our consul."

"No consul on earth can save you, for you are already known to the Spanish Government as treacherous wire cutters and mine destroyers. You can be treated only as criminals and suffer the highest punishment, which is death."

"Ha!" cried Ford. "Now you have cut your fingers. How do you know that the Spanish Government knows of us and our mission here? You are the only man on earth besides them who can claim to know this."

"Betrayed!" said May, sternly.

Clark's face turned black as a thunder cloud. For a moment his hand sought for a weapon, and his eyes flashed fires of hatred.

"Quick to judge, are you not?" he gritted. "As a matter I have my information from you!"

"From us?"

"Yes, for it is you who have asserted positively that the Spanish Government knew the details of your secret trip into this harbor."

Frank laughed lightly.

"That is a very flimsy subterfuge, Ensign Clark," he said. "You cannot wear the mask longer. We know you as a printed book. You

may as well show your true hand. But, back to the United States with us you are going!"

"Not alive!"

"We shall see!"

"Stand back on peril of your life."

Frank and the two lieutenants had closed in upon the villain. In another moment he would have been a prisoner.

But just at this moment a shrill whistle was heard. Upon the shore above, there appeared a number of Spanish soldiers.

They carried no carbines, but were armed with short swords and revolvers. They recognized those below as Americans at once.

Noting their wet and bedraggled appearance, they at once regarded them with suspicion.

"Carissimo!" cried the captain. "Filibusters or spies! Stand and surrender!"

Down the shore ran the soldiers. Frank and the two lieutenants acted with the quickness of thought.

They whirled about and started like deerhounds down the beach. The Spaniards yelled frantically for them to come back.

Then they fired after them, but their shots went wild.

Then the soldiers pounced upon Clark. To their surprise he offered no resistance, but said in Spanish:

"Captain General Blanco will pay a big reward for the arrest of those Yankee spies! After them!"

"But you," cried the Spanish captain; "who are you? Were you not with them?"

"As a prisoner."

"Your name?"

"Ensign Clark of the U. S. navy."

"Ho! Then you are an enemy to Spain!"

"Not much!" cried Clark, forcibly. "On the contrary I am in the employ of your government as a spy."

The Spanish captain looked at him penetratingly.

"Your papers?" he asked.

"Take me before Captain General Blanco, and you shall have them."

"It shall be done."

Clark remained in charge of two of the Spanish soldiers, while the others set out in pursuit of the three fleeing Americans.

But they might as well have tried to catch the south wind. Frank and his companions had now reached the spot where their helmets were concealed.

They knew that the best thing they could do was to get off Spanish soil the quickest possible way.

So they dived in the water for the helmets. It required but a moment's time to put them on.

Yet they were none too soon.

The Spanish soldiers had kept up a constant fire and the bullets sped around them like hail. Also, natives had begun to rush out of the houses near.

These latter they did not fear as they were Cubans. But they waited not to fraternize with them, but plunged at once into the water.

In a few moments they were safe enough from the shots of the Spaniards. Down into the harbor depths they went.

And as they did so, suddenly Ford clutched Frank's arm and shouted:

"I see the search-light of the Filibuster."

"You do?" ejaculated Frank.

"Yes."

Ford pointed away through the dark waters. Then a common cry went up. All saw a gleam of white light.

That it was the search-light of the submarine boat there was not the least particle of doubt. Without a moment's hesitation all started for it.

And before long it had become so plain that by shading the eyes the hull of the Filibuster could be seen.

Barney and Pomp standing in the pilot-house window, suddenly caught sight of the three forms staggering toward them.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TORPEDO EXPLOSIONS.

The joy of all at the safe return of the adventurers to the Filibuster can hardly be expressed in words.

They embraced each other with the most profuse of joy and ecstasy. To be sure the prisoner Clark was gone, but Lieutenant Ford said:

"Let him go. His fate will be none too kind!"

"That is true!" cried May. "He is forever ostracized from his own people!"

"And the Spaniards are not the most loyal of friends. They may go back on him yet," declared Frank.

Barney and Pomp were delirious with delight at the fortunate outcome of the affair.

"Shure, Misther Frank," cried Barney, "we reckoned not to see yez again!"

"You did the right thing in returning here!" said Frank. "For it gave us a chance to rejoin you!"

Very quickly a new plan of action was decided upon.

The submarine defenses of Havana Harbor were now well known. A good report could be made to the Secretary of the Navy.

It was, therefore, decided not to remain longer in the harbor, but to return home at once.

So the submarine boat was turned about and headed out of the harbor.

While Frank was engaged in picking a way out through the entangling wires and among the mines, Ford and May went into the cabin and began work on a map of the harbor bottom.

Much of value had been learned, and though the expedition would be known to the Spanish Government, they could not afford to say much about it, in view of the fact that a United States war ship had just been blown up in the harbor, and it was suspected by one of these submarine mines.

As it was, the United States Government had the exact information it desired, while the Spaniards were unable to establish enough evidence for a *casus belli*.

Ford and May were elated with the success of the plans.

They could think of nothing now but of getting to Washington as speedily as possible and turning over to the secretary the result of the expedition.

The treachery of Clark would create a sensation.

But it was a fortunate thing that the traitor had been located. There were doubtless others in the employ of the government.

The villain was safe for the nonce, but he was not a subject of envy. Among the class of people with whom he had fraternized, he would be none too happy.

The Filibuster was rapidly making its way over the first line of submarine mines, when suddenly a terrific shock was felt which knocked every man from his feet.

The boat pitched and rocked violently. The waters surged about the boat like a perfect caldron.

When she became steady, and the voyagers were able to speak, Lieutenant Ford cried:

"We must have sprung a mine; that was an explosion!"

"But not near us," declared Frank. "If it had been, we should have been destroyed!"

"What do you make of it then?"

"Ah, there goes another."

Again the boat leaped and rocked violently. The explosion was evidently further away.

A light overspread Frank's face.

"I have it!" he cried.

"What?"

"They are sinking torpedoes to blow us up or bring us to the surface. Doubtless they will go all through the harbor thus."

"Whew!" ejaculated Ford. "We had better get out to sea the quickest possible way."

"We ought to be out now."

"There is no time to lose."

This was true enough. If they remained in the harbor longer, it would be at the imminent risk of being destroyed.

At any moment a torpedo might descend upon them, or at least near enough to blow them to atoms.

So Frank started the boat forward at full speed. Explosions followed in rapid succession.

It was plain that torpedoes were being dropped all along the channel which led out of the harbor. The risk was most imminent.

Every nerve was now on the qui vive. The boat was traveling at a tremendous rate of speed.

Once a torpedo exploded within fifty yards of her. She nearly capsized, and the shock was such that it seemed for a time as if all was over.

Frank hung to the wheel and kept her steady. Once it seemed as if she would surely get out of the harbor in safety.

Then the climax came. A dark object slid down from the surface, just astern of the submarine boat.

There was a terrific shock which seemed to lift the boat like a feather and whirl it about like a top. For a moment it seemed as if the end had come.

Frank looked every instant to see the water pouring in upon them in a flood. He was prepared for death.

But the shell of the submarine boat remained intact. Her hand rails and the hamper of her folding masts were carried away, and there were fearful dents in the steel surface.

But just as all were beginning to congratulate themselves upon their escape, there was heard a strange whirring and clicking in the engine-room.

Then suddenly the Filibuster shot upward like an arrow.

The next moment daylight was about them. The astonished voyagers beheld the surface of the harbor, the distant tower of Morro Castle and the ships.

While not fifty yards distant was a small boat, one of many scattered over the harbor, flying the Spanish flag.

It was easy to see that these crafts were engaged in the exploding of the torpedoes.

For a moment not one of the submarine voyagers knew what to do or say.

They were actually spell-bound. The transformation was a most startling and astounding one.

Then they rushed to the windows and stared at the scene before them.

"By the great hornspoon! what did you come up like this for, Mr. Reader?" cried Ford.

"It is not my work," answered the young inventor.

"Not your work?"

"By no means!"

"How did it happen?"

"The torpedo must have sprung the tank lever. Look and see, Barney. If you sink the boat quickly, or we will stand the risk of a shot from the Vizcaya or some other ship."

"All right, sor!"

The Celt sprung into the pilot house. In a moment he returned.

"Shure, sor," he cried, "the electric connection is afther being broken intoirely. Most loikely it was the torpedo, sor."

The voyagers were aghast.

"Mercy on us," cried Ford. "Then we are lost."

"Don't say that!" cried May.

Frank went into the pilot house to satisfy himself. He saw that the delicate automatic work of the tank machinery was badly disjoined.

It had closed and exhausted the tank, thereby sending the boat to the surface.

The position was one of the most extreme peril, and not yet had they faced its like. It called for immediate and decisive action.

Already guns were booming from fort and ships and signal flags were flying. The small fast sailing yachts began to bear down upon the Filibuster.

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Ford. "This is getting warm for us."

"It is fight or surrender," cried May.

"Never the latter," said Frank, grimly. "The necessity for that is past. We will die, but never surrender!"

"Correct!" cried Ford. "It would be death to surrender!"

Frank went to the key-board. He turned on full head of electricity and made a course out of the harbor.

The way in which the submarine boat sped down between the converging lines of Spanish yachts was a caution. She ran like a ghost.

And now the small guns of the yachts opened fire.

The balls and shells went hissing through the water hotly. It was a moment of imminent peril.

Should one of these missiles strike the boat, then all would be up, if it struck a vital part. This must be guarded against as far as possible.

It was likely that the Spaniards at that moment were elated and felt confident of capturing the Filibuster.

Frank saw that something must be done at once to ward this off. He had so far refrained from retaliation.

Now, however, he saw the necessity of a return shot.

He relinquished the wheel to Barney and went down into the engine room and thence forward to the gun room.

It was but a moment's work to place a projectile in the gun. Then he aimed for the water in front of the nearest yacht.

The dynamite shell struck just at the point he had aimed for. The result was wonderful.

A column of water full fifty feet high rose in the air. The tidal wave from this hurled the hostile yacht back and high capsized it. It had one favoring effect. It checked the headway of the craft.

Frank could have destroyed it at a blow, but he did not desire to do this.

He treated another of the pursuing vessels the same way. This gave the Filibuster a chance for a good lead.

But now the long prow of a gun-boat was seen to shoot out into the harbor.

There was a sullen roar and shells went flying through the water all about the Filibuster.

This was a new and appalling peril for the submarine boat. The guns of this craft were larger and heavier and could throw much further.

Should one of these shells explode very near the Filibuster all would be up with it.

This was certain.

What was to be done?

Frank measured the distance to the gun-boat. He saw that it was rather an unwieldy craft and that very likely it would not be able to navigate shallow water.

So a course was made more to the westward.

This led the Filibuster into some shoals, and here the gun-boat was obliged to give up the chase. She, however, stood out to sea across the Florida Channel.

This headed the Filibuster off from her homeward course. Had she now been able to travel under the surface, all would have been well.

But she was not, and she was hotly pursued in the rear by the yachts.

Frank saw now that a westward course was his only avenue of escape. Moreover, he realized the peril in keeping along the coast of running into another gun boat.

There were passing vessels of other nationalities which watched the chase.

But it was likely that none of them realized its significance. They doubtless believed it the chasing of an American filibuster or some insurgent vessel.

CHAPTER XII.

WHICH IS THE END.

ALL this while the two lieutenants as well as Frank Reade, Jr., were considering the feasibility of an escape westward.

It would not enable them to make the port of New York from whence they had sailed.

But they could, perhaps, gain the mouth of the Mississippi river, where the Spanish would not dare follow. Then at New Orleans, or even at St. Louis, they could disembark.

To do this, however, it was necessary to run more to the north. This would enable the gun-boat to give more direct chase.

But Frank no longer feared her.

He believed he could outsail her on the level, and put on all speed.

Gradually the Filibuster kept edging off to the northward. Fifty miles was run in quick time.

The Spanish gun-boat was now seen to be hull downward on the horizon. The little yacht only held on in the chase.

Frank might have turned about and annihilated all of them with his electric guns.

But he realized that this was not a time of war. Moreover, his mission to Cuba had been a secret one, and to make a battle on the high seas would be to make it public to the world.

So he contented himself with giving the yachts a stern chase.

Darkness was coming on, and then it would be an easy matter to give them the slip.

"I will mind the wheel, Mr. Reade, if you wish to make repairs on the tank," said Ford.

"That will be of no use," declared the young inventor.

The two lieutenants gave a start.

"Why?" they asked.

"The shell of our boat is perforated by a ball."

This was unknown to any but Frank. All were amazed.

"Where is the shot hole?" asked Ford.

"In the bow, about a foot above the water's line!"

"Then we must be taking water?"

"Some splashes in. There is an inch or two in the hold."

"Then the value of the Filibuster for a submarine boat is forever destroyed," said May.

"I fear so," declared Frank. "I do not think she will be worth repairing when we get home. If we only get home safely in her, it will be all I shall ask."

"The government will make you whole."

"I shall not ask that," replied Frank. "She is my property, and I came to Cuba at my own risk."

All went forward and examined the shot hole. Barney was lowered over the bow rail, and stopped it up partially with some material.

In case of a storm the risk would be great. Otherwise the boat could go a long distance without much trouble.

Nightfall was now rapidly coming on. The electric lights were not used, for they wished to elude the pursuers.

As chance had it, the sky was overcast and the sea was dark.

This was greatly in the favor of the fugitives.

All that night, Frank and Barney remained in the pilot-house of the submarine boat.

They watched the horizon as far as they could see. Frank changed their course far to the north.

When daylight came not one of the Spanish boats was in sight. It was plain that they had abandoned the chase.

It was a matter of great relief to the voyagers.

"Now," said Frank Reade, Jr., "we could turn about and hug the American coast on the return around the Florida Peninsula to New York. But I hardly think it advisable."

"Nor I!" agreed May.

"The boat might encounter a storm when we would all be likely to go to the bottom for good."

"What do you suggest?" asked Ford.

"We will go to the delta of the Mississippi and disembark at New Orleans. You gentlemen can go on to Washington with your report, and Barney and Pomp and I will return to Readestown."

"Very good!" agreed Ford. "Your plan is all right, Mr. Reade."

"Then you agree to it?"

"By all means!"

Frank held the Filibuster still to the northward. He had now decided to take his bearings so as to locate the mouth of the Mississippi.

But at this juncture, Barney called his attention to the barometer.

"Shure, sor," he said. "It looks loike a storm."

The night had been cloudy, and the sky was now black and heavy. Deep thunder muttered in the west.

Frank looked anxious.

"If the storm is a heavy one, we may not ride it out," he said.

"How far is it to the American coast?" asked Ford.

"I do not know!"

"Ought we not to strike for it?"

"Certainly, but I fear we shall never reach it."

This was an ominous declaration.

"What shall we do?"

"If the worst comes, I have several small boats aboard, which we can embark in. They are non-sinkable, and we might out-live the storm in them."

"That is hopeful," declared Ford. "We will not borrow trouble, however, until it comes."

"A very good plan!"

Every moment now the storm drew nearer. The sea began to run dark and heavy.

The Filibuster pitched heavily, and took in much water. It was certain that in her battered state she could outride the storm.

Frank proceeded to get the boats, which were of rubber and held three men each, in readiness. They were lashed together.

Then they were held at the rail in readiness.

The sea now ran tremendously high. Rain and wind came driving in from the west.

Heavily the boat pitched. Soon the storm became a hurricane. Then the Filibuster's seams began to open, and water poured in at every joint.

The time for action had arrived.

Further delay would be fatal.

Frank and his companions gathered up all their portable effects and secured them as well as they could about their persons.

Then they went to the rail to embark in the rubber boats. It was no light task.

The first heavy sea lifted the boats and carried them with their human freight far out into the yeast of yawning waves.

This was the last ever seen of the Filibuster.

That she speedily foundered and went down there was no doubt.

The castaways were tossed about in the angry sea for over an hour. Then down through the waters came the black hull of a ship.

They were seen, and a great coil of rope came out from the deck. It was caught, and they were drawn aboard.

The steamship Apache from Galveston to New York it was. The voyagers were nigh exhausted when rescued.

The captain of the steamship saw that they were well provided for, and that every comfort was given them. The passengers were much excited as usual over the rescue.

State-rooms were given the castaways, and they slept until the next day, when they arose much refreshed.

Altogether they were relieved when they learned the destination of the steamer.

"After all we are in luck," cried Ford. "This will land us all in New York, and avoid the long overland journey from New Orleans!"

"I shall be glad to get back to New York," declared May.

"Bejabers!" averred Barney, "after all we may yet fall into the hands of the Spaniards."

The others gave a start.

"Barney is right," declared Frank. "This ship will probably be boarded before we get around Key West."

"Do you think that?" asked Ford.

"I do!"

"Then we had better make provisions to land somewhere this side of there."

"Correct!" cried May.

"I have a better plan!" said Frank.

"What?"

"We will see the captain and tell him all. He will put us in hiding until we are safely around Key West."

"Will he do it?"

"He is a loyal American. It will be his duty."

"But the passengers—"

"They will be easily led to believe that we left the vessel after dark and were transferred to another ship."

However, Frank's plan did not become necessary.

That afternoon the lookout sighted a vessel on the port bow. It was one of Uncle Sam's white cruisers.

The captain of the Apache had been taken into the confidence of the voyagers.

He was an old naval officer, and as Frank had said, a loyal American. He at once fell in with the plan suggested.

The war ship was signaled, to the surprise of the passengers. A half hour later one of her officers came aboard.

He was closeted with the two lieutenants for some while.

Then he went to his boat and was conveyed to the white cruiser.

After this the U. S. war ship sailed along within hailing distance of the Apache.

When Key West was sighted, sure enough, a Spanish cruiser was seen hovering off the coast. She made as if to bear down upon the Apache.

But the white cruiser shot in between her and the steamer, and the Spaniard fell astern.

He did not care to board an American ship while those frowning guns threatened. The voyagers were safe.

An hour later they were in the Gulf Stream gliding northward, and leaving Havana Harbor and the thrilling scenes of six days' submarine work far behind.

In due time the Apache tied up at her dock in New York Harbor. Then the passengers disembarked.

The two lieutenants sped on to Washington as fast as the Pennsylvania road could take them. When they arrived there, they went directly to the navy department.

A few days later Frank Reade, Jr. received letters of praise and thanks from the secretary and the president, and an offer of indemnity for the loss of the Filibuster.

But Frank refused the latter offer, and said:

"I will build a boat yet for the defense of my country, such as the world never saw, when the need for it comes."

So, if our country is plunged into war, our boy readers may expect to see Frank Reade, Jr.'s name the highest in the list of her defenders on sea or land.

With this announcement, let us for a brief while take leave of the young inventor and write

[THE END.]

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